

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 EB-08 /093 W
-----071742 130819Z /12

R 130638Z SEPT 77
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5383
INFO AMEMBAYWY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KHARTOUM 3136

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SU
SUBJECT: CABINET CHANGES

REF: A. KHARTOUM 3112, B. KHARTOUM 3107

1. CABINET CHANGES (SEE REF A) WERE MAJOR SURPRISE TO
POLITICAL OBSERVERS AND ARE CAUSING SPECULATIVE WAVE.
RUMOR CIRCUIT PRIMARILY SEEKING CAUSES IN NATIONAL
RECONCILIATION EFFORT, ECONOMIC REFORM PROGRAM AND GENERAL
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. REMOVAL OF FOREIGN MINISTER KHALID MAY
BE FOR DIFFERENT REASONS.

2. MUCH ATTENTION HAS FOCUSSED UPON NIMEIRI'S ASSUMING
POSITIONS BOTH AS PRIME MINISTER AND MINFIN. MANY PUNDITS
CLAIM THESE POSITIONS RESPECTIVELY BEING OFFERED TO SADIQ
AL-MAHDI AND HUSSEIN AL-HINDI. SADIQ, OF COURSE,
FORMERLY WAS PM AND AL-HINDI HIS ECONOMIC MINISTER.
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TIMING OF MINISTERIAL SHIFT NEATLY DOVETAILS WITH MISSION OF
NIMEIRI'S MEDIATOR BESHIR (SEE REF B). HOWEVER, EMBASSY
FINDS THESE RUMORS DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT--PARTICULARLY THE
OFFER OF TWO KEY POSITIONS INCLUDING PM'S JOB.

3. MORE CREDIBLE ARE STORIES RELATING CHANGESTO PLANNED

ECONOMIC REFORMS. NIMEIRI WAS IN EGYPT WHEN CABINET DECISION WAS MADE TO CUT EXPENDITURES AND OPEN NEGOTIATIONS WITH IMF. THUS, TWO HYPOTHESES. NIMEIRI FEELS HE WAS NOT SUFFICIENTLY CONSULTED BY PM AND MINFIN KHATIM PRIOR TO SUCH A MAJOR DECISION AND/OR NIMEIRI DOES NOT APPROVE OF REFORM PACKAGE. ALTHOUGH WE WERE SURPRISED THAT CABINET DECISION ON REFORMS WAS MADE IN PRESIDENT'S ABSENCE, WE DOUBT THAT PM AND MINFIN WOULD HAVE BEEN SO NAIVE AS TO PUSH CABINET APPROVAL WITHOUT NIMEIRI'S OKAY. INCIDENTALLY, PM RASHID AND MINFIN KHATIM ARE CLOSELY TIED--THEIR WIVES ARE SISTERS. MORE LIKELY, VARIOUS MINISTERS WHO WERE ASKED TO TAKE SUBSTANTIAL CUTS COMPLAINED TO PRESIDENT UPON HIS RETURN FROM EGYPT. NIMEIRI MAY HAVE FELT COMPELLED TO TAKE PM AND MINFIN POSITIONS EITHER TO LEND HIS PRESTIGE TO NECESSITY OF AUSTERITY AND REFORM PROGRAM OR TO OVERTURN PM'S AND MINFIN'S PROGRAM. GIVEN SUDAN'S CRITICAL BOP POSITION, ONE WOULD ASSUME PRESIDENT MUST SEE NECESSITY FOR STRONG MEASURES. ON OTHER HAND, CUTS IN SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURES WIN LITTLE POPULAR APPLAUSE.

4. RESHUFFLE ALSO MAY BE DESIGNED TO SHIFT BLAME FOR SUDAN'S ECONOMIC PLIGHT AWAY FROM PRESIDENT. WHILE SUDANESE ABLE TO ENDURE GREAT HARDSHIPS, MANY ARE COMPLAINING THAT CONDITIONS ARE WORST FACED FOR MANY YEARS. POWER AND WATER FAILURES, LACK OF TELEPHONE SERVICE PLUS CONDITION OF STREETS AND ROADS ARE NOTICEABLY WORSE. ACUTE FOOD SHORTAGES--NOT TO MENTION LACK OF FUEL--ARE
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PARTICULARLY AGGRAVATING DURING HOLIDAY PERIOD. SHORTAGE OF SUGAR IS MOST DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT. IN MIDST OF THIS SHORTAGE THERE ARE RUMORS OF SUGAR SCANDAL INVOLVING TWO AGENCIES (CUSTOMS AND SUGAR CORPORATION), BOTH UNDER SUPERVISION OF MINFIN. ACCORDING TO RUMOR, SMALL PORTION OF INCOMING SUGAR CARGO WAS WATER DAMAGED. HOWEVER, OFFICIALS IN PORT SUDAN DECLARED HALF OF CARGO WATER DAMAGED, REPORTED ITS DESTRUCTION AND SOLD IT. IF TRUE, SUCH SCANDAL WOULD CAUSE MAJOR POLITICAL PROBLEMS, PARTICULARLY WHEN PEOPLE ARE BEING ASKED TO ACCEPT GREATER HARDSHIPS. NIMEIRI MAY HAVE DEFUSED CRITICS BY ABRUPTLY SHIFTING PERSONNEL.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KHARTOUM 3136

5. NIMEIRI HAS ONCE AGAIN REMOVED MANSOUR KHALID FROM

FOREIGN MINISTRY. HIS EARLIER DISMISSAL SUPPOSEDLY WAS
BECAUSE OF HIS PROPENSITY FOR TRAVEL WITH TOO LITTLE TIME
IN KHARTOUM. HE DISPLAYED THE SAME PROPENSITY IN HIS
MOST CURRENT REINCARNATION. HOWEVER, OTHER FACTORS MAY
BE MORE IMPORTANT THIS TIME. ACCORDING TO ONE REPORT,
EGYPTIANS WERE DISPLEASED WITH KHALID AND COMPLAINED TO
NIMEIRI. KHALID MAY HAVE BEEN BLAMED BY EGYPTIANS FOR
WHAT THEY INTERPRETED AND FEARED AS BEGINNING OF
IMPROVEMENT OF SUDANESE RELATIONS WITH LIBYA. ALSO,
KHALID MAY HAVE TOUCHED A RAW NERVE ON DAY PRECEDING
SHUFFLE WHEN MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON OAU CONFERENCE HE
HEADED REPORTEDLY DETERMINED THEY WOULD NEED 50 MILLION
DOLLARS FOR KHARTOUM SUMMIT NEXT YEAR. THERE MAY ALSO BE
FEELING THAT FORMER PM AND NEW FOREIGN MINISTER--WITH
HIS PREVIOUS MOSLEM BROTHERHOOD ASSOCIATIONS--MAY BE
MORE EFFECTIVE IN DEALINGS WITH SAUDI ARABIA; A CRITICAL
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FACTOR WITH SUDAN'S PRESSING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

6. QUESTIONS OF SHIFT'S RELATIONSHIP TO NATIONAL
RECONCILIATION SHOULD BE CLEAR WITHIN SEVERAL WEEKS.
EMBASSY WILL BE PROBING STATUS OF ECONOMIC REFORM
PACKAGE AFTER HOLIDAYS. BEST EXPLANATION OF REASONS
FOR SHIFT PROBABLY WILL COME DURING PRESIDENT'S MONTHLY
FACE THE NATION BROADCAST WHICH PROBABLY WILL BE AFTER

ID AL FITR CELEBRATIONS.

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